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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD, EUR/RPM AND EUR/ERA  
OSD FOR POPOVICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - DECEMBER 12, 2008

11. (U) PM SANADER EMPHASIZES EQUALITY ON FIRST VISIT TO ZAGREB MOSQUE:

On Monday, December 9, Prime Minister Sanader paid his first visit ever to the Zagreb Mosque on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. Sanader greeted the Mufti of Zagreb, Mufti Omerbasic, with a traditional Muslim greeting, attended celebratory ceremonies and took a tour of the mosque. Sanader said that his presence demonstrated that the government of Croatia is a government of "all Croatian citizens" and asked that Croatians remember that people of all faiths defended Croatia during the Balkan wars and many Muslim soldiers gave their lives so that Croatia could be independent. (JNCallahan)

12. (U) VISIT BY RADICAL SERB POLITICIAN TRANSPIRES WITHOUT INCIDENT:

Deputy President of the Serb Progressive Party, Aleksandar Vucic, completed a three day visit to Croatia on Wednesday, December 10. Vucic had heavy police protection as he visited Serb returnees in the Zadar region of the country. There were no incidents of violence reported. Vucic stated that he did not wish to open old wounds but only to help "those forgotten by Serbia." He pledged to create aid programs for Croatian Serbs, which he intends to submit to the Serbian parliament for approval. Returnees complained about lack of job opportunities and basic services such as electricity. Vucic shocked the local Croatian media when he claimed to have never heard of a well known massacre that took place in a nearby village, though Vucic did say he condemns any war crimes that may have been committed. (JNCallahan)

13. (SBU) MINISTERIAL VISITS BETWEEN CROATIA AND SERBIA:

On December 10, the Croatian Minister of Culture, Bozo Biskupic, met his Serbian counterpart Nebojsa Bradic. Biskupic thanked Bradic for creating a new commission at the Serbian Ministry of Culture for the return of cultural artifacts taken from Croatia during the war. (Note: The GoS recently gave back some artwork that was removed from Croatia at the time of the war.) The Croatian MFA and the Serbian Embassy informed post that Serbian Minister of Internal Affairs Ivica Dacic was also scheduled to visit Zagreb this week. (PD'Amico)

14. (U) ANTI-GOVERNMENT FACEBOOK DEMONSTRATION FIZZLES:

On Friday, December 5th, rallies organized by the Facebook group "You tighten your belts, you bunch of thieves," were held in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka and six other smaller towns in Croatia. The group has approximately 60,000 followers on Facebook, but only some 1,000 to 2,500 people attended the event in Zagreb, while total attendance throughout the country was around 3,500 people. Inclement weather kept the number of protesters down. Organizers stressed that the protests were non-political and were intended for the average Croatian to voice their frustration with the government.

Speeches criticized the political elite from all sides, the media, trade-unions, and civil-society organizations. The group voiced approximately twenty demands to the national parliament including a fair review of the privatization process, clampdown on organized crime, cuts in the prices of basic consumer goods, and taxes on luxury goods. The demonstrations were criticized by some for lack of organization while others pointed out the importance of social networking sites as an outlet for dissent.  
(JNCallahan)

15. (U) RANDOM ACT UNDERScores SECURITY VULNERABILITIES AT THE SEAT OF GOVERNMENT:

Around 2PM local time on December 5, a 34 year-old war veteran deliberately crashed his Yugo-model car into the entrance of the Croatian parliament on St. Mark's square near several other important government offices. The motives for the incident have not been made public. No one was injured in the incident, and the doors to the parliament building were minimally damaged. The ease with which the driver was able to approach parliament has surprised the public and highlights the light security footprint around Croatia's key government buildings.  
(DMeges)

16. (U) DANISH PARLIAMENT APPROVES ON CROATIA'S NATO ACCESSION PROTOCOL:

On December 9 the MFA reported that it has been notified that the Parliament of Denmark has approved Croatia's NATO accession protocol. The MFA noted that this vote makes

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Denmark the 11th NATO member country whose parliament passed the protocol. (PD'Amico)  
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